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Sam R. Leedom

CALIFORNIA WATER DEVELOPMENT, 1930 - 1955

An interview conducted and edited
by
Gerald J. Giefer

Statewide Water Resources Center, University of California
in cooperation with the
Regional Oral History Office, Bancroft Library, Berkeley

Berkeley, 1967

Sam R. Leedom

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PREFACE

The following interview is one of a series on "The Oral History of California Water Resources Development" sponsored by the Water Resources Center of the University of California and conducted at the Los Angeles and Berkeley campuses of the University during 1965, 1966, and 1967. In setting up the project, the nature and scope of the work was described as follows:

> The basic purpose of this program will be to document historical developments in California's water resources by means of tape recorded interviews with men who have played a prominent role in this field. Much of the published material on California's water resources describes engineering and economic studies of specific water projects. Little, however, is devoted to the concepts, evolution of plans, and areas of authority exercised by various interested Federal, State and local agencies.
>
> For example, there is little reference material with regard to the transition of administration of the Central Valley Project from the State of California to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation in the early 1930's. Similarly, the negotiations leading to contracts for water between the State of California and the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California are not documented. Yet, both of these agreements had profound effects on water resources policy in California. Recorded interviews can piece together these important links in California's water resources history. The resulting material will provide a valuable fund of information for researchers in the years to come.

The Berkeley project is under the faculty direction of J.W. Johnson, Director, Hydraulics Engineering Laboratory;

Professor, Hydraulic Engineering, and David K. Todd, Ph.D., Professor of Civil Engineering. Gerald J. Giefer, Librarian, Water Resources Center Archives, is responsible for the interviewing and processing of the manuscripts which are being handled in co-operation with the Regional Oral History Office of the Bancroft Library. Final manuscripts are available for research at the Water Resources Center, UCLA; Department of Special Collections, Library, UCLA; Department of Special Collections, Library, UC Davis; Water Resources Center Archives, UC Berkeley; The Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley; and the Regional Oral History Office, UC Berkeley.

Included in the series at this date are Harvey O. Banks, Sam Leedom, and Sidney T. Harding. The researcher is also referred to oral history interviews on California water development done previously by the Regional Oral History Office with Frank Adams, Louis Bartlett, Stephen Downey, William Durbrow, Herbert Jones, Charles Lambert, and J. Rupert Mason.

Willa Klug Baum, Head
Regional Oral History Office

15 September 1967

Regional Oral History Office
Room 486 The Bancroft Library
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INTRODUCTION

Sam Leedom was associated with California state water administration for eighteen years. Prior to his state government service, he was a newspaperman for fifteen years.

Mr. Leedom's newspaper career began in Orland, Glenn County, in 1924. He worked also in Redding before joining the Sacramento Bee in 1927, where he remained until shortly before undertaking government service. His newspaper years were high-lighted by several trips to the Orient from where he dispatched stories of the Japanese in Manchuria (1933), and on his second trip (1936), of life in the Dutch East Indies.

His association with water in California began in 1939 when he was appointed, in the Olson administration, as administrative officer to the Water Project Authority. During World War II, Mr. Leedom served in the Army with the rank of Captain: he had served also in World War I with the Navy. Following World War II he became administrative assistant to the State Water Resources Board. He retired from this position in 1957.

Mr. Leedom lives in El Granada where he and his wife have a house on the side of a hill overlooking Half Moon Bay. They think now that they gave themselves too much garden space. It was at their home that this interview was recorded in 1966, in a room facing the

sea and decorated with pieces of the batik brought home from the East Indies. Mr. Leedom wanted mostly to "spin a yarn" about his old friends Ed Hyatt and Bob Edmonston, which he does with fondness and respect.

Gerald J. Giefer
Librarian, Water Resources Center Archives
August, 1967

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(Interview No. 1, January 13, 1966)

Personal Reminiscences

Giefer: You were born in Wyoming?

Leedom: No, I was born in Nebraska, but I grew up in a small Mormon community in the Big Horn Basin in Wyoming. This is in the early 1900's. My father bought a newspaper in Lovell, Wyoming in 1908. We were one of three gentile families in the community. This made me a suspect minority. At that time the Mormon Church in Salt Lake was in the process of settling colonies all through the Rocky Mountain area. They would send out to various localities a group of about 100 farmers, artisans, etc. and start the colony. It so happened that in the Big Horn Basin they established three: there was Lovell where I grew up, Byron up the Shoshone River about eight miles, and Cowley across on the other side of the river. This formed a triangle about eight miles to the side.

These people were true pioneers in developing raw land and putting it under irrigation. They did all of it by the pick and shovel, horse and scrapper methods of those days. In the particular locality where I grew up, they diverted their water by gravity from the Shoshone River which heads in Yellowstone Park. One of the first large Bureau of Reclamation projects was built here. The Shoshone Dam near Cody and canals extended down to the Powell Flat which was a distance of about 20 miles. That

Leedom: was among the first of the Bureau of Reclamation projects. It was quite fancy compared to the Mormon project which was another 20 miles down the river.

These Mormons were supposed to be able to make water run uphill. If you looked at their canal which followed along the foot of a bench at the edge of the valley, it certainly did appear to run uphill.

Giefer: Where did they acquire this know-how?

Leedom: I don't know where they acquired the know-how. I think it was from experiments in Utah. These people came from what they called "Dixie" in southern Utah, which is down around St. George. I believe there is an irrigation system there built by the Mormons in those early days. However, they did not understand drainage. Their canal was built on almost a cobble rock base so they lost a good deal of the water through seepage. The seepage backed up behind cross ridges of hard pan and eventually turned their farming area into white lakes of alkali on which nothing would grow. I am talking about 1910. At that time their crops were what was called lucerne, which is alfalfa and sugar beets. Those were the principle crops of the area. If they grew 18 tons of what we now consider low sugar content beets to the acre, they thought they had a marvelous crop. As a matter of fact, that became a center of sugar beet growing, that area and the Powell Flat. The Western Sugar and Refining Company built a sugar refinery in my town of Lovell, Wyoming.

Leedom: However, I did not become acquainted with irrigation in California until after World War I. I came direct from my discharge from the Navy at Brooklyn to Los Angeles. The area around there was all under irrigation. I could not believe it because there were no ditches. You saw no running water anywhere in the Los Angeles area. It was hard for me to believe that they were actually irrigating. You could see the cement stand pipes at intervals in places but it did not look like irrigating to me.

Getting out of the Navy, I found that all you had to do in Long Beach was to appear in your uniform and they would give you a job in the ship yards for a fabulous salary in those days. I worked there from the time I arrived in southern California in January of 1919, until the opening of the fall semester at Berkeley. Then I found that I could combine my studies at the University with a night shift at the Moore Ship Yard down in Oakland. I had the classification of riveter. Riveting is pretty heavy work. I could also handle the chipping and calking gun which is much lighter. So I went in as a chipper and calker in the ship yard and worked there nights. I would leave Berkeley on the key system train that ran me down to the Oakland station. From there I guess I walked up to the ship yards, or they may have had a jitney transportation system. I don't remember. My connection with water up to that date had been nil except for the irrigation

Leedom: in Wyoming.

Incidentally, speaking of Wyoming and water, I had never seen a pond of water larger than a lake about a mile across before I enlisted in the Navy. I was sent back to Chicago and up to the Great Lakes Naval Training Station where I was confined like all others in the Navy for two weeks in a camp to make sure that we were bringing no serious disease into the ranks. Then we were given a week-end leave. There was a lake shore interurban which ran up through Waukegan to Milwaukee. On this leave I had my first view of Lake Michigan. A friend of mine from Omaha, Nebraska, who was in the same company of the Navy as I, found out that there was a lot of free entertainment in Waukegan so we boarded this interurban train and started up there.

I was sitting on the right hand side of the car. Suddenly here was an expanse of blue reaching to the horizon. I had never before seen such a thing. I had never seen anything blue which reached to the horizon which was not a blue pine-clad mountain. I said to my companion, "I thought there was a lake around here. What is that hill out there?" He said, "You fool. That's Lake Michigan."

But to get back to California water. After I went to the University, I did not finish my final term. I had to be out one semester to catch up on my college debts. I decided, like a good many other young people, that there

Leedom: was very little else that the University could teach one so well informed as I was at that point. I had decided at the University to become a mechanical engineer. At the end of my sophomore year I came back to the fraternity house in which I lived and roomed with a senior in engineering. This particular night they were engaged in a very difficult engineering problem. I came in, casually looked over their shoulders, and went to bed. The next morning when I got up, I thought, "What an idiot I must be to be taking engineering when I did not have enough interest in a senior year problem to even ask anything about it." I immediately changed over to Letters and Science and began to take everything which I thought would be required to fit me for a newspaper career because I had grown up with a newspaper since the time I could set type.

The summer of 1922 I spent as a linotype operator up on a little paper in the middle of the Sacramento Valley at Orland. It was located in the center of the Bureau of Reclamation irrigation project, the Stony Creek project. That actually was my first contact with irrigation in California. They had great dreams of grandeur for the future of that area. It was going to bloom and blossom like no other area in California. Warren Woodson, a promoter at Corning, had built a tower in the center of Corning. In those days they were still bringing train loads of middle-western land seekers to Corning. He would take them up in this tower of his and show them

Leedom: the expanse of orange groves and olive groves; that was going to be the great future of California right there.

Newspaper Work in the Sacramento Valley

The following year, at the end of the fall semester, I started up the Sacramento Valley with a banjo under one arm and a suitcase under the other, all my possessions in the world, looking for a job, a newspaper job. In spite of my great learnings at the University of California, I found that my services as a newspaperman were rather lightly regarded by the editors who interviewed me. I tried though. I hit all the towns from Sacramento to Chico. It so happened there that I struck it rich, not as a newspaperman but I got a job with a dance band playing for the New Year's and Christmas' dances. It refinanced me for sure.

Then I tried Red Bluff. Finally at Redding I talked with Walter Fink who was editor of The Courier Free Press. After outlining to him my experience, and trying to impress him with my brilliance, he sat back and said, "Well, how much do you think it should cost me to let you experiment with my paper?" I told him that I had several bad habits. I like to sleep indoors, like to eat, and I was a little finicky about having clean shirts, and that I had one very bad habit--I smoked cigarettes. He told me, "You go over to Mother Stone's. She has a boarding house around the corner. It is a good one. Find out what it will cost

you a month. Then you figure out what these other necessities will cost you."

So I did; it was $60 a month at Mother Stone's boarding house. I figured that the laundry and cigarettes would not cost me more than $10 because I had an ace in the hole in my banjo. Fink hired me for $70 a month as a cub reporter on his newspaper.

There were two daily papers in Redding--The Searchlight was a morning paper and The Courier Free Press was an afternoon paper. They are now combined into one paper.

Giefer: Did you go back to school after that?

Leedom: No, I worked for Fink for two years. Then I leased the Orland Register from Wigmore, the editor. I ran that for eight months. I was trying to do both the inside and the outside work. The result was that I overdid it and finally had a breakdown. I think probably the bad grape brandy that they made there had something to do with it because I developed a rheumatic condition and I had to give up the lease on the paper. After several months of boiling out at the springs and recuperating, I went back to work for Fink in Redding.

By then I was making $35 a week. No, I was making $25 a week. Fink walked into the office one day and said, "I've got some relatives back in Pennsylvania and I am going to take a little trip back there. If you get in any trouble, Ore Chenoworth is our attorney. The fore-

Leedom: man of the composing room is a gentleman and a scholar; take his advice." With that he walked out and left me with the paper on my hands. I did not hear from Fink for two months. Then he sauntered in one day just as casually as he had walked out. He walked over to the back issues of the paper and flipped through them. I think he was looking more as an act then anything. He came into my office and said,"I see we haven't any libel suits on our hands. You've done all right," he said, "I think I will raise your salary."

That week end I got a check with a salary of $45 a week dated back to the time when he had gone on his trip.

Redding at that time was very much interested in the investigation at Kennett being conducted by, I think, the Division of Irrigation. Kennett was the location of a copper smelter that had flourished to the extent that the fumes from it had killed all the fish in the river; killed off all the vegetation on the hillside; and made farming something of a problem down the upper part of the Sacramento Valley. But California had passed a law enforcing what we now call smog control. The smelter finally shut down . It was still running when I first went to Redding in 1923. I think it closed down shortly thereafter. The interest there, of course, was intense in the proposed dam at Kennett.

There was just as much interest however in a proposed

Leedom: dam at Iron Canyon in Red Bluff, the rival city 30 miles down the highway from Redding. Red Bluff was booming Iron Canyon while Redding was booming the Kennett Dam project. Both were under study by the state at this point.

The Sacramento Bee

It was not until I was offered a job with the Sacramento Bee that I actually came into close contact with the water problems in California. The Bee was an ardent public ownership supporter. That was one of its basic policies. It had about three: one was public ownership; two was trees, all trees were stately and had to be conserved; three, if it could be called a policy, was that it was not news until it was printed in the Bee.

By a fluke of circumstances I was only on the Bee about eight months when I was made the city editor. This is beside the point, but when I moved to Sacramento I had a young doctor friend who had been made the prison doctor at Folsom. My wife and I used to run up there quite frequently on weekends. I would tour the prison with the doctor so I became quite intimately acquainted with the interior of the prison. The following Thanksgiving was the Thanksgiving Day riot at the Folsom Prison. It developed that there was not a soul on the Sacramento Bee who knew anything about the interior of the prison, nor did they have any pictures of it. I happened to be the

Leedom: lucky person who did know so they moved me onto the city desk. I drew diagrams,which our artists finished, showing the layout of the interior of the prison and so on and so forth. Then when we finally got finished putting out extras at about two o'clock in the morning, I crawled into my car and went up to Folsom. I sat around for an hour or so and then came back to the office and wrote a color story of the thing. Carlos McClatchy, the son of the owner of the Bee who had been a captain in the infantry during World War I and thought himself quite a military man, had been at his father's home in Sacramento as a guest for Thanksgiving. When the prison riot broke out, he immediately took off and took full command of the National Guard and everything else involved in the riot. The next morning he wrote a page one yarn. He had the grace to put my two column color story as a side box of his on page one. Otherwise I would probably have been a copy reader in what they call the "Sup" department ["Superior California News"] for another 100 years. As a result of that fluke though, I came to the notice of both C.K. and his son. There was an opening coming up on the city desk. They needed a city editor so I was moved in as a raw recruit from the outside over these old heads who had worked around there for 15 or 20 years.

Giefer: You had been there for how long--six or seven months?

Leedom: Yes, six or seven months.

Giefer: How did you happen to come down to Sacramento?

R. M. Edmonston and Ed Hyatt, October 3, 1940

Leedom: Through Roy Goodwin who was in charge of the "Sup-Cal". You see there was not any "Northern California" on the Sacramento Bee. It was always "Superior California". They had a whole section of the paper devoted to the hill-billy news from every crossroad in northern California. They called it the "Sup-Cal" Department. The copyreaders in this department had to take the scribbled notes of these country correspondents and their telephone calls and translate them into English. They had to get them into the paper in readable form.

Giefer: Things like "our special correspondent in Orland?"

Leedom: I had been the correspondent in Orland and Redding for the paper. I will say this for the McClatchy newspapers, the Bee's whole foundation and popularity was based upon the fact that they carried the news of every hamlet in northern California. They made a specialty of rural news. Nations might be crashing all over the place, but it was more important whether Mrs. Jones gave birth to a daughter or a son. That was in 1927.

Ed Hyatt and R. M. Edmonston

That same year Ed Hyatt was made state engineer. Sacramento at that time was a city of 65,900 people. If you knew everyone who belonged to the Sutter Club and the country club, and the outstanding state officials, then you knew all the important people in Sacramento. As the city editor, it was my business to know them, so I knew

Leedom: Ed Hyatt from the day he was made state engineer. I think so far as this record is concerned, I want to deal largely with what I consider the two giants in our water development from a state standpoint. That is Ed Hyatt who served the longest time of anyone as state engineer prior or since, and Bob Edmonston, his right-hand man who came to the division much later than Ed did, though; his hidden strength in the division. I have always thought of them as a Castor and Pollux team. One depended upon the other; the strength of one was the strength of the other.

Edmonston was the engineering genius. Hyatt was the brainy front man who knew when a thing should be pushed, how far it should be pushed, and how to deal not only with the state politicians but with the national politicians as well.

Giefer: Hyatt was in the division while McClure and Bailey were both there?

Leedom: Hyatt's career in what we now call the Department of Water Resources dates back to 1916. When he retired in 1950, he had had thirty-five years in the state departments of which thirty-three had been connected with water development in California. He had spent two years with the California Highway Commission between 1914 and 1916 when he transferred to the, then, State Water Commission.

Giefer: Actually, Hyatt and Edmonston were contemporaries.

Leedom: Ed was born and raised down in Riverside County right on the edge of the desert. He went to school in his early days out in Jacinto which is right on the edge of the desert. His father then was the superintendent of schools of Riverside County. I think, yes, at the time Ed was graduating from high school in Riverside in 1906, his father became state superintendent of education in Sacramento so the family moved from Riverside to Sacramento. Ed actually grew up in Sacramento politics from the time he was out of high school. He entered Stanford. His class was 1910, the same as Edmonston's. He took time off though. He went east to school for one year. I think then that he just dilly-dallied for another year, but he graduated in 1912.

Edmonston, on the other hand, grew up in Humboldt County, the wettest spot in the state, or nearly the wettest spot in the state, in a little village of Petrolia. He never let anyone forget that he was from Petrolia, Humboldt County. He went to school up in Ferndale. He often told me that during the flood stage of the Eel how difficult it was for them to get to school because they rode horseback down to the Eel River, crossed the river by rowboat, went to school in Ferndale, then they made the trip back; each time they made the trip it was necessary to drag the boat far upstream then start out rowing and land far downstream on the other side. Particularly during these winter months when the Eel was in flood stage it was

Leedom: hard.

Bob graduated from Stanford in 1910. He immediately went into the construction of irrigation works. I think the South San Joaquin irrigation district was the first one he worked on. Incidentally, one of his most valuable assistants, P.H. VanEtten, also worked on that irrigation project.

Both Edmonston and VanEtten were veterans of World War I. Throughout their entire career, they were very closely associated. While VanEtten never signed a document other than P.H. VanEtten, he was always addressed by his friend Bob as Percival Hicks VanEtten. As I say, I knew Hyatt intimately long before I actually got mixed up in the politics of water in California. I say intimately; I mean as a newspaper man knows a prominent state official. He was continually in the news columns from 1930 on through the rest of his career, a period of 20 years. I think there was scarcely a week that went by that Hyatt did not make news. He was either in Washington on conference, or someone from Washington was out here. He was one of our best news sources around the state capital for the Sacramento Bee because the Bee, you might say, was an ardent supporter of the development of our natural resources, particularly if it were done by public enterprise. Private enterprise was frowned upon although the McClatchy chain of newspapers and radio stations was probably one of the most prominent, sprawling chains of private enterprise in the

Leedom: state of California.

Giefer: How do you suppose something like this happens? Was it a personal idiosyncrasy?

Leedom: It was a personal idiosyncrasy on the part of C.K. McClatchy. Old C.K. was a very fine gentleman and a scholar, but he had decided somewhere in his early days that our natural resources such as water and power should be developed only through public effort. Public ownership was the watch word. He was all for irrigation districts and their private construction because that was public construction. He was bitterly opposed though to the development of any of our streams by the Pacific Gas and Electric Company, the Southern California Edison Company, or Western State Gas and Electric Company. Like many successful editors, once a policy was established on a paper, it was never changed; it might be stupid; it might be senseless; it might be anything, but it was never changed. As a result people would say, "Well, I don't agree with old C.K. but he certainly is a fighter. He never changes his positions." Which is one of the elemental things concerning newspapers that many people overlook. In order to be respected, establish a policy and never change it, regardless of whether you are proved wrong or whether you are right; don't change. Then you become successful and respected.

Giefer: Do you recall from this early period Hyatt's opinion of how things were going in the division?

Leedom: Hyatt, in spite of being the promoter of what was a fabulous proposal for those days, was actually a very conservative, cautious man. He never tried to build an empire in his own department. He kept his staff down to a minimum. He and Edmonston had the ability to get good men. They had men like VanEtten, Gerald R. Jones, Bob Jones, Jim Haley, Ray Matthews, Stafford, Althouse, and in addition to that, they were able to get support from the leading experts in water and power development in the state. Look down through the list of consultants in Bulletin 25, which proposed the Central Valley Project and the "State Water Plan." This actually was not the State Water Plan at all. It was a plan for the immediate development of a major project in the Central Valley, but it was called the "State Water Plan."

The Marshall Plan

To go back a little, Ed Hyatt, when he got out of college, went with the U.S.G.S. making surveys in the state. Robert Bradford Marshall was the top man in the Federal Geographical Surveys at that time. It has often been said since that Ed's association with Marshall was directly responsible for his creation of the Central Valley Project. However, in the many years that I knew him intimately, I did not get that impression. Marshall's project, with its giant canals along both sides of the Valley, was not a new idea. It had been proposed back

Leedom: in the 1880's or thereabouts as a private enterprise. They were going to combine transportation of water with canal boat transportation to supplement the railroads. Marshall's plan was splendid on paper but it was not realistic in that it cut across every irrigation development that had already been built in the Central Valley, the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys. It was impossible also from the standpoint of construction. It interfered with water rights, water supplies, already established districts. As I say, it looked fine on paper and was a grandiose scheme, but Ed Hyatt was too much of a realist to go for anything like that.

Ed Hyatt and the California Water Plan

His state water plan was actually a kind of a will-o'-the-wisp that developed like a chrysalis. It started with one man's idea and was improved upon by the next man. All of these men--Paul Bailey, McClure, previous state engineers, had a hand in bringing the project to an engineering fruitation. Each one of these previous plans was deficient in some respect, even as the Central Valley Project as proposed in 1931 was deficient in some respects. They were going to pump water up the San Joaquin Valley. They were going to use the San Joaquin River with a series of dams and pump from one to the other and so on and so forth. That has been changed, but basically the Central Valley Project as it exists today is the same thing that was proposed

Leedom: in 1931.

As I say, I knew of and about Hyatt through the years from 1927 up to 1939 because he was news. Those were the days of constant movement in our water development particularly in the early 1930's. Of course when Bulletin 25 came out we were in the throes of a great depression. I think it was the following year that Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected and established the New Deal. He took the county out of the doldrums and held up hope that maybe the federal government would lend a hand in this monstrous project out here. It was not then conceived that the federal government should take it over by any manner or means. But, what the state wanted was some federal assistance.

Giefer: Incidentally, what were Hyatt's politics?

Leedom: Ed Hyatt was a die-hard, dyed-in-the-wool, conservative Republican. This reminds me of one of the most embarrassing days of his life, I think. Ed had worked with every, what I call old water-wheel, in the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valley. Most of them were very conservative farmers, big farmers and successful farmers, almost to a man die-hard, conservative Republican. It camealong the time of the ground breaking (I think it was in 1939) for the Friant Dam out from Fresno. The Bureau of Reclamation planned a big ceremony to draw attention to their ground breaking activities down there. The old water-wheels joined in with them, but they took over the matter of the ceremony

Leedom: to the point where they virtually crowded all of the Bureau people out of the picture. But the guest of honor for the occasion was Harold Ickes, director of the Department of the Interior; Harold was not about to be shoved aside by anyone. They were holding a dinner in his honor at Fresno. All of the prominent California Democrats were at the head table. Ickes was flanked on one side by Governor Olson and on the other side by Frank Clark who was the Director of Public Works, and so on down the table, all the very prominent Democrats. Sitting alone at the head table in this great welter of New Deal Democrats was poor little ol' Ed Hyatt. He sat there facing out in the audience all the die-hard, conservative Republicans of the San Joaquin and Sacramento Valley.

Incidentally, everyone for as long as I could remember Ed was always referred to Ed as "little ol' Ed." Actually, Ed Hyatt stood about six feet tall. When he squared his shoulders up, he was rather broad shouldered. He was very thin though and kind of slouched and had an utter disregard for his clothes. He usually looked as if he had just come off second best in a wrestling match with Harpo Marx, but that was probably why everyone referred to him--poor little ol' Ed. He was far from being a little man and was a great outdoors man. He loved to ride and hike. He was an ardent fisherman. I guess he came by it naturally. His father before him was a great outdoors man, a great

Leedom: naturalist, but very careless about his manner of dress. I had this story from Merritt Nickerson, who was the photographer for the Department of Public Works for many, many years: One time there was some function in the capitol when the leading state officers were to attend accompanied by their wives. The elder Hyatt was walking down the corridor of the capitol. Nickerson overheard him tell his wife, "Now you just walk ten feet behind me, Mrs. H., and no one will know you are with me."

Edmonston, on the other hand, who was born in a very mountainous, attractive area, cared nothing whatsoever for hunting, fishing, or outdoor sports. He did have one foible, however. If there was a crooked mountain road as an alternate to a well traveled road, he would take the crooked mountain road that led back into the hills, past dam sites, and so on and so forth. When he got back where it was impossible to go any farther, he would get out and hike. He was a huge man and he would scramble up and down the hills with the best of them in spite of the fact that he had a bad leg which he got from a construc tion accident, I think, when they were building the dam at Lake Spaulding. He was working then for the Western State Gas and Electric which later was absorbed by the P.G. & E. I don't know just how the accident occurred, but his leg was badly broken in several places. It bothered him for the rest of his life.

Water Project Authority

Leedom: Let us get back fo the beginning of my real involvement in water resources development in California. In 1938 Senator Olson was campaigning against Frank Merriam for the governorship and won the election. When he was inaugurated in January of 1939, the whole picture in Sacramento changed. The capitol was filled with a horde of hungry Democratic office seekers because it was the first time in 30 years or more that a Democrat had been elected governor of the state of California. During that Session of the legislature, I was working for the Associated Press and became well acquainted with George Killion who then was Olson's public relations man. The governor was having great difficulty in finding worthy Democrats to fill open state offices. He made Killion Director of Finance, Director of Motor Vehicles, and an acting office holder in three or four other positions. This, of course, eliminated his usefulness to the governor as a public relations man. George asked me if I would step in and help out in the governor's office. With my background with the McClatchy newspapers, it was assumed that I was an ardent public ownership advocate, a sound New Dealer, because the McClatchy papers had supported Roosevelt from the beginning of his candidacy. And I guess that I was sold on the New Deal and its program of socialization. However, any competent newspaper man can write just as good a speech for a Democrat as he can for a Republican or he

Leedom: is not worth his salt to begin with. You have to be like an attorney. You take a case and you are either for this or against something. If you are a competent attorney, then you prove your case.

At any rate the governor's office was short on funds for staff. They solved the problems by hiding out in the various departments the men who could aid the governor's cause. Because of my background with the McClatchy newspapers, it was felt that the best place for me would be executive officer of the Water Project Authority. I was put on TAU there, took the civil service examination, and subsequently was appointed the administrative officer of the Water Project Authority. At that time Ed Hyatt, of course, under the law was the secretary of the Authority. It was the duty of the administrative officer to do the secretary's work.

That was my first acquaintance with Bob Edmonston. Up to that time he had been just a name to me. When I first walked into his office, he was seated as usual at this desk. He was a huge man, always in white shirt sleeves as I was later to find, always with a cigarette in his mouth, the ashes dripping down his necktie. He rather reminded me of a wily old elephant. He knew you were there but he did not let on that he knew it.

At that time Frank W. Clark was the Olson appointee as the Director of Public Works. He was cramming the Division of Water Resources with New Dealers, actually with

Leedom: the objective of ousting Hyatt who was far from sympathetic with the ardent New Deal objective of socializing all water and power resources in the state. They installed Louis Bartlett, a little attorney, I guess 65 years old, from Berkeley, a member of the Commonwealth Club whose principal objective in life was to beat the drums for public ownership. Secretly Clark was touting Louie to take over the position of Chief of the Division of Water Resources although he was not an engineer. It would have involved some shifting of the law but that has been done before. He [Bartlett] had a dual capacity--one, to see that Hyatt and Edmonston initiated a vigorous campaign for public ownership; and the other, to report directly to Clark on any variation from this objective.

Giefer: How did Bartlett fit into the Commonwealth Club? They certainly were not for public ownership, were they?

Leedom: No, but they had a very large collection of members and he was one of the odd-balls in the Club. He was a shrewd little attorney, but unsound. He was like all idealists--he had a nebulous objective that he did seem to be able to rationalize with the reality of the situation.

At the time I went to work for the Authority, they had collected a group in the Division headed by Bartlett which included a couple of so-called power experts, Ernie Rollson who had been the city manager in Redding which had a municipally owned power system was one. Then there was a so-called fiscal expert by the name of Crocker, and

Leedom: several others. Their purpose was to issue a bulletin which would show the advantages of public ownership of power. Edmonston, of course, was in charge of this endeavor. Without appearing to do so, he checkmated them at virtually every move. In other words, he said, "Okay now let's take Redding. It has municipal ownership. Let's find out what is off the tax rolls in Redding, that would have been paid by a private utility, what rate benefits do the consumers get, and so on. How much of this is supported by taxes. Let's see how much of this is hidden away on the library funds, and how much of it is hidden away here, and hidden away there." He knew all of the cover-ups, you might say, used to make public ownership most desirable.

Being an appointee direct from the governor's office, I of course was under suspicion as being a spy and a cut-throat for some time. However, Ed and I hit it off immediately. It was not very long before I became cognizant of the underground politics that were going on. My sympathy was entirely with Hyatt. The Water Project Authority at that time was comprised of Frank Clark, the Director of Public Works; George Killion, Director of Finance (both of these were Olson appointees); Earl Warren, then Attorney General; Gus Johnson, a Republican hold-over; and Ray Riley, State Controller. This gave the Authority a membership of two Democrats and three Republicans. The three Republicans of the Authority were not too terribly, to say the least,

Leedom: in accord with their chairman's views on public ownership. My position as administrative assistant, under direction of the chairman, was not the most comfortable.

Clark had the habit of giving orders without seeking the advice of the Authority. Then he would have them countermanded by the majority on the Authority. For instance, it was the second year of the exposition on Treasure Island where the Authority had a Central Valley Project exhibit. It was proposed that a pamphlet on the Central Valley Project particularly emphasizing the desirability of its cheap power feature be boomed. I think it took me five months of preparation and revisions directed by Clark, and re-revisions directed by the Water Project Authority. When it was finally issued, it was a very adequate pamphlet. Far under the desires of the department and Clark, but a fair statement of fact. Incidentally, I was in charge of that exhibit on Treasure Island. For the first time we accomplished a method of super-imposing motion pictures on a slide background. The exhibit comprised a sixty foot diaramic screen, one of the first diaramas in California. With sets of balopticons we showed a huge map of California 60' long and 20' high. This map changed with the story of the development of the Valley. Then, with a series of three automatic moving picture projectors we showed the actual scenes of construction of the Central Valley Project in their location on the map. We showed irrigation works, products and so on, to animate

Leedom: the show, which lasted some 15 or 20 minutes. The whole thing was operated from a very rudimentary forerunner of our computer or punch button system of running things. The voice, the background music, all of the balopticons, moving picture projectors, the opening of a double set of curtains, one heavy outer curtain with a golden curtain behind it on which the original map of California was first dimly shown as the curtains opened on our diaramic screen. It all ran off of this one machine which was constantly going on the blink. It required the work of an electrician almost daily during the run of the second year of the fair. It did attract a great number of people though. It brought to them visual evidence of the progress of the project up to that date.

Giefer: This was in 1939 and 1940?

Leedom: 1939, the fair ran 1938 and 1939 and this was the second year of the fair. I was on the island practically all the time. We, Merritt Nickerson and I, took all the moving pictures. I did my own cutting and pasting of the film. It turned out to be a pretty good little exhibit.

(Interview No. 2, January 18, 1966)

Ed Hyatt and the Central Valley Project

Ed has often been called the father of the Central Valley Project. I think he was probably both father and mother of the project. He was directly responsible

Leedom: for it being authorized by state law.

The project itself was, of course, the culmination of a long series of engineering studies in which Ed participated actively from the early 1920's onward. His background in the division was such that, of necessity, he became acquainted with the leaders in irrigation development in the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys and in southern California and the Imperial Valley. Every irrigation district in the state, new or old, had, and still has probably, water rights problems. The Division of Water Resources was the last recourse in these questions outside of the courts. As a consequence, Ed had a wide acquaintance not only with the people directly responsible for the management of the irrigation districts, but also the basic problems of the districts both in engineering and legal areas. You have to remember that, in 1920 and 1921 when the final engineering studies were authorized for the Central Valley Project, the state was relatively small in population. It had about three million people of which a relatively small minority were concerned with the water development in the state. The large industrial centers were not particularly concerned with water problems at that time. Therefore, out of the three million people Hyatt became personally acquainted with virtually everyone in the state who dealt with the development of water resources. As I said before, Ed's manner of dress and simplicity of approach to the individual

Leedom: created confidence among the farmers and others who were engaged in developing the water resources.

Giefer: He was being sent out on assignments?

Leedom: Either through being sent out or through people coming to the Division for advice or with their problems. In addition to that, the field studies which were being made of the Central Valley Project through the period of 1921 up until 1931 brought the Division of Water Resources and the personnel of the Water Resources in close contact with the farmers in the irrigation districts throughout the state.

With this large acquaintance, it was only natural that when he became the state engineer in 1927 the people in water development would turn to their friend Ed Hyatt for advice or help with their problems. When Bulletin 25 was finally issued in 1931, Ed in turn went to his former friends for their support.

During the 1920's it must be remembered that the Water and Power Act which would put the state in the water and power business had been defeated at the polls at least three times. It was defeated in 1922, then in 1924, and again in 1926. So when the Division of the Water Resources under the direction of Hyatt proposed construction of a project of the magnitude of the Central Valley Project, it can readily be seen that it was almost an insurmountable problem to convince the people of the state as a whole that this was a necessary and meritorious project. Recognizing

Leedom: this backlog of apathy or unconcern regarding water problems on the part of the people, Hyatt was saddled with the job of selling the project to the people of California. It was a slow process.

It was not until 1934,three years after the project was proposed by the Division, that it was finally authorized by the legislature. Then after the legislature had passed the Central Valley Project Act, it was forced into a referendum. This was when Ed's friendship with leaders in agriculture and business began to pay off. He was responsible for organizing what was called "The Central Valley Project Association" which consisted of key figures in business, farming, industry, up and down the Sacramento and the San Joaquin Valley; Clarence Bruener of Sacramento; Jim Fauver of Visalia; Roland Kern of Bakersfield; and a number of others. I cannot recall all the names of the men who were active in the Association. This organization provided the funds to finance the publicity necessary to sell the people of the state on the need for the Central Valley Project. The services of Clem Whittaker were obtained. If I am correct, Bill Warne, now the Director of the Department of Water Resources,as a young newspaperman was hired as one of Clem Whittaker's assistants to help promote the Central Valley Project.

Giefer: Wasn't it out on the coast, where the campaign was really pressed?

Leedom: Yes, the fear was that southern California would be indifferent

Leedom: to the project because there was no provision in it to bring water into southern California. However, the San Joaquin Valley was in very dire need of additional water supplies.

The Association realized that if they did not sell Los Angeles on the need for this, that it was a lost cause. So they boomed the fact that if the farmers in the San Joaquin Valley, where this water was destined did not get this water, then Los Angeles would lose its business of marketing the products of the San Joaquin Valley. They also inferred that if Los Angeles did not support them, San Francisco would be given preferential treatment in marketing farm products. This was therefore a matter which affected their purses. Of course, when you affect the purse of a businessman, then he becomes interested. So, the businessmen in Los Angeles picked up the cudgel for the Project and in the final referendum, it squeeked through by a very narrow margin. However, it was adopted and the $170,000,000 bond issue was voted.

Once that major bridge had been crossed, the state was confronted with the fact that $170,000,000 would not be sufficient or could not be raised to build the project. The Division and Water Project Authority, under the recommendation of the legislature, turned to the federal government for financial assistance.

I want to backtrack just a little on that. At the time of the referendum, the fabulous Jimmy Rolph was our

Leedom: Governor. Rolph was sold on the need for the Project through his good friend and political supporter Matt Sullivan of San Francisco. In addition to setting up the California Water Resources Commission, the governor decided that he would appoint a super-duper committee to end all committees, a state-wide committe of 380 people representing every interest in the state to assist this Water Commission in supporting the Central Valley Project, which he did. Rolph on one of his visits to Redding heard, inaccurately, that there were two dam sites which he assumed were to be of equal value. Actually, it was the site of the Shasta Dam at Kennett and the Afterbay Dam at Keswick. In a burst of exuberance Jimmy said, "Well, let's build them both." He wanted two big dams. That was the kind of a gentleman he was. If he were for anything, then he was wholeheartedly for it. While his name does not often appear in the record of the development of our water resources, he actually played a very important role during his period as the governor of the state of California in creating interest in the project. If there ever was a showman in our governor's office, Jimmy Rolph was that, in addition to being a very sound and shrewd politician.

To get back to Hyatt, under the direction of the legislature federal assistance was sought. The Water Commission, the Water Project Authority created by Central Valley Project Act, and the Central Valley Project Association

Leedom: all began sending delegations to Washington to appeal for federal assistance. Hyatt, naturally, accompanied each of these delegations back to Washington. In addition, before federal assistance could be obtained,a report on the engineering and economic feasibility of the project had to be made by the federal agencies. Therefore, the Project was reviewed by the P.W.A., the Bureau of Reclamation, the Army Rivers and Harbors Board, the Federal Power Commission. Each of these agencies reviewed and made a report on the project. So Hyatt was on a constant circuit between Washington and Sacramento. During this period, as I have said before, he was news. He was news every day of the week almost. He was the kind of state officer that you could pick up the telephone and ask for Hyatt and he would come on. You could say, "Ed, how about this dispatch out of Washington?" He would immediately fill you in with the background details necessary to make a good story out of an otherwise brief, dry paragraph out of Washington.

His contacts in Washington included not only the Army and the Bureau, but the United States Geographic Survey with which the state had a cooperative contract in mapping large portions of California. After I began making trips back to Washington with Ed, his approach to these officials was always that they were chiselling bureaucrats and he was representing the pocketbook of California. You would think that every penny that was put up by the

Leedom: state on a cooperative contract with the federal government came directly from his own pocket.

Giefer: He was just channeling the money back where it belonged, is that it?

Leedom: That was for sure.

Giefer: You were telling me that he kept a little book that he used, to give himself entrée...

Leedom: Yes, I'll tell you about that. I did not know it was in existence until after we had made a couple of trips back to Washington. It surprised me that he would be able to walk into any office in Washington--Senator, Congressman, the Chief of Engineers, over in the U.S.G.S. offices, and the Department of the Interior offices, and immediately be greeted by a great smile by the secretary who was the receptionist. Ed would ask her about either her children, or how her ailing mother was if she was single; when she expected to get married, and countless personal details about each of these receptionists. It was not until a couple of years later that I discovered that Ed had a habit of chatting with these secretaries and with gentle probing find out something personal about them regarding their own family, or this and that. Then when he left the office, he would make a note of it in his little black book. He had the ages of their babies if they were married; he had their wedding anniversaries; little items like this which when used on return trips made each of his appearances seem as though he were just a member of the family because of his

Leedom: inquiries into their personal welfare. It was one of the many reasons he was greeted with open arms in every office.

In addition to that, Ed, despite his rather unassuming appearance, had a very keen mind, and a faultless memory. In his dealings with the officials behind these receptionists, he seemed to be greeted with equal welcome. There was very little formality in his dealings with the Washington officials except where it was required. Virtually all of his contacts you could consider informal in nature. I believe they yielded greater results than a formal approach to every problem, and there certainly were innumerable problems.

From the time of the appearance of Bulletin 25 in 1931, up through the final passage of the Central Project Act and its adoption after the state referendum, you must remember it was at the height of the Depression when money was scarce. There had been a drastic change in Washington though under the Roosevelt administration. They had innumerable agencies set up in the government trying to assist people nationwide out of the Depression. The P.W.A., the N.R.A., countless alphabetical organizations and the so-called brain trust. They were looking for opportunities to expend federal money where it would assist in the recovery from the Depression. The Central Valley Project appeared to be a very likely project in which the federal government could extend some of its relief funds. The more the federal agencies looked over the project, the better it

Leedom: looked to them. I think under the "Old Curmudgeon" as he was called, Harold Ickes, the long range possibilities of the Central Valley Project were immediately recognized and smiled upon. Ickes recommended to the President that this was a project the Department of the Interior and the Bureau of Reclamation might well take a hand in. This I do not know from personal experience but I do know the results.

You see memory is like a scuba diver's view of an underwater reef. It is decorated with the light and shadow of events that follow. My memory is not a true picture of what happened at that moment just as the scuba diver's view of an underwater reef is colored by the sunshine or clouds or wind on the surface or turbidity of the water. It is not a true picture of the reef. Well, memory is like that, I believe. What you think you remember today is colored with subsequent events. I believe that is true of my memory of the mid-thirties when the project was being promoted.

Giefer: At this time you were working for the Bee and in touch with Hyatt. Were you making any trips with him at this time?

Leedom: No, at that time they were all trips to Washington by Hyatt or trips by the officials at Washington out here to look the project over; we had Congressional committees touring the project and innumerable officials. All the basic data though was in the hands of the state. This was very important. When it was finally decided that the

Leedom: federal government would invest money in the project, it actually required adoption as a federal project. After the preliminary appropriation which was never spent, that was the $6,900,000 of federal money that was put up for the construction of Friant Dam, it was found that it would be impossible to build Friant Dam without first building Shasta Dam. On the recommendation of, I presume the Army and the Department of the Interior, the Central Valley Project was reauthorized in 1937. An additional appropriation of $12,500,000 was approved in the Interior Bill by the President in September, 1937. That is really the beginning of true federal involvement in the Central Valley Project.

Of course, at that time, as I said, all of the basic data was in the hands of the Division of Water Resources of California. The federal government had approved it as a federal project, but it had no basic data with which to begin the construction of the project. It led to a series of cooperative agreements between the Water Project Authority representing the state of California and the Department of the Interior representing the federal government by which the state's basic data was made available to the Department of the Interior so they could initiate the construction of the project.

It was assumed from the first by the state that this would be a joint venture, but by 1939, when I first became actively connected with the Water Authority as an administrative assistant, it had become evident that unless there was a definite showdown, the state would be eased out of

Leedom: the picture. There were many conferences between Bureau officials and the Authority (which was largely dependent upon Ed Hyatt for its representation), to settle the question as to the role the state should play in connection with the project. Out of each of these conferences, nothing developed further than a temporary contract to continue the relationship between the Authority providing the basic data and the Bureau continuing the construction. This was the situation in 1939 when Olson became the Governor.

To further complicate the matter, immediately on the day that the governor assumed office, he had a heart attack and was taken to the Sutter Hospital in far from satisfactory condition and placed under an oxygen tent; for several days it was a question of whether he would ever assume the governorship. There was, of course, great confusion among the Olson appointees because if this attack proved fatal to the governor, Ellis Patterson, the lieutenant governor, would take over and there was a question of whether they would remain in office. This condition continued all during the first session of the legislature. I don't believe the governor got back into the office until just about the close of the first session of the legislature, so all business was conducted from the hospital bed through his son Richard as an indirect emissary from the father to the key men in the administration, which was not like direct communication.

Leedom: It was at the end of the session that I went to work in the governor's office. It was only two or three months before I was transferred over to the Water Project Authority, still more or less, rather more than less, responsible to the governor's office. I think I said before that coming out of the governor's office to the Water Authority, I was regarded with some suspicion, particularly by Bob Edmonston. Even probably by Hyatt. But by the end of my six months probationary period, Clark had become equally suspicious of my position with the Authority and attempted to have me fired before I became a permanent employee of the Authority. Ed Hyatt and Earl Warren, George Killion and even Olson jumped on Clark for it so he dropped it.

In the meantime, I had learned a great deal about the difficulties that confronted the Division and particularly Ed Hyatt as the head of the Division. On the one hand there was the federal government very reluctantly giving the state any encouragement as to participation in the project. On the other, there was the Olson administration red-hot on public ownership and planning the take-over, if possible, of the sale of water and power which would be produced by the project. Ed was certainly in the middle. It required some dexterous maneuvering to keep abreast with the administration's desires and objectives and to fight off the federal government's encroachment. As a state officer under the direction of the legislature, and as the executive

Leedom: officer of the Authority, the Secretary of the Water Project Authority, it was necessary for him to follow the state's objectives.

It must be remembered that in the 1939 session of the legislature the Pierovich Bill, which in effect would have set up a little T.V.A. in California permitting the state to act as the distributing or selling agency for the project's water and power, was defeated by a very narrow margin. This, of course, left the state in an even worse position than before with the Central Valley Project. However, that did not discourage Hyatt, nor the Water Project Authority. I mean it did not keep them or restrain them from seeking additional funds for the project, which they did every year, it was one of the principal Water Project endeavors.

Earl Warren

In 1942, I was commissioned in the Army and that is the end of my connection with the Water Project Authority. However, after I finished with my war duty, I again went into state service, this time with the newly created State Water Resources Board. That was during the Warren Administration.

Speaking of Warren, I want to emphasize his ability to grasp details and to retain them indefinitely. When I was still with the Authority and he was the Attorney General, his aspirations for the governorship were already evident.

Leedom: He asked Ed Hyatt to fill him in on what was basically necessary to be well informed on water problems in various areas of the state. Hyatt delegated me to go down to Oakland armed with such material as I thought would be of assistance and to spend a couple of days with Warren. We did that at his house out in Oakland. We would start early in the mornings with the briefings, work until noon, then after lunch begin again and work until five o'clock in the afternoon. To my amazement, in spite of the fact that I was loading him with statistical material of all kinds regarding the water resources of the state of California and background material, he could play it back to me almost like a tape recorder. He was a very easy man to work with. Once he assimulated any data, he seemed to retain it indefinitely. That was the only water briefing, so far as I know, that Warren had before his campaign, although as attorney general and W.P.A. member he had a good general picture of California's water problems. Yet, he used it extensively throughout his campaign.

His interest in water continued from the time that he was on the Authority right through all his years of the governorship. It directly resulted in his recognition of the need of an additional agency in the state to handle not only the problems of the Central Valley Project, which was the direct responsibility of the Water Project Authority, but also the numerous flood control and other

Organization meetin- State Water Rascurces Board - November 1, 1945

Organization meeting State Water Reecurcse Board, November 1, 1945

Standing: Howard Cozzens, Royel Miller, R.Z. Etcheverry, Leeter Ready, R.V. Meikle, and Ed Hyatt
Sitting: C.A. Griffith, Bradford S. Crittenden, Governor Earl Warren, and Phil Swing

Leedom: future water development programs in the state. He backed the legislature creating the State Water Resources Board and appointed its initial members. They were chosen by lot for their terms. In other words, you drew lots whether you received a two year term or a four year term and the terms were staggered.

The membership of that first board included Royal Miller of Sacramento; Lester Ready, one of the consulting engineers on the original Central Valley Project, the electrical expert; B.A. Etcheverry, the Dean of Engineering at the University of California; Roy V. Meikle, the long time general manager and engineer of the Turlock-Modesto Irrigation District; Howard Cozzens, for thirty years the County Engineer in Monterey County; and Phil D. Swing, an attorney and ex-Congressman from San Diego: I think that is it.

Central Valley Project

Giefer: To go back to the thirties again, why didn't the state back in the early thirties ask to have the federal funds through the Reconstruction Finance Corporation? Why did they instead...

Leedom: I cannot answer that. They went, of course, originally to the P.W.A. The P.W.A. asked for a feasibility report which Ray Matthews made, I think, almost single handed. I don't know though why they did not go to the Reconstruction Finance Corporation. Probably it was because the R.F.C.

Leedom: was for industry of a private nature rather than the P.W.A., which was for public works projects. I am only assuming that, but I think that is why the effort was made to get P.W.A. funds. Then of course, when the P.W.A. was folding up, they transferred their part in the C.V.P. to the Department of the Interior where the Bureau of Reclamation was the construction agency in the water business in the federal government. As I contend, they, presumably Ickes, took one look at the project and decided that it was much too good for those people out in California, that it should be a federal project and that its long range employment and other benefits to the federal government were much greater than the state realized. I still believe that it was naive, not only on the part of the state legislature, but the state administration, one succeeding the other, to believe that the federal government would put up money to assist them in building a state project without taking over completely once it got its foot in the door, which is exactly what happened.

Giefer: You made a remark when I first met you, something to the effect that there was a point at which P.G. & E. could have...

Leedom: Yes, when the state found that it was in difficulty in financing the project under the $170,000,000 bond issue, the time was right for a great private power interest to step in. The door was wide open for them. If they had stepped in and said, "Now you have a fine project here and it has a large power potential so we want to help you build

Leedom: that project. We will help build that project by underwriting the power facilities of it." It would have made it easily feasible for construction as a state project along with the federal contribution on flood control. But the power companies were fearful of any state project that would develop power. They short-sightedly opposed the project from its inception. Their oppostion, of course, immediately closed the door and made them the bitter enemies of those promoting the Central Valley Project. It then evolved into a public and private power fight, with the power companies opposing the project although I don't believe their opposition to the project as such had any particular effect on Washington. It was effective enough to block the state's little T.V.A. to handle Central Valley Project power. It only served to change the distributing agency from state to federal. That of course is hindsight on the whole thing. The door, as I say, was wide open to them if they had been far-sighted enough. They could today be handling all the surplus power of the project. The project itself is a large power eater and ties in naturally with the private system. During certain periods there is a lot of surplus power available on the project not required for pumping. That is a valuable asset, or would have been a very valuable asset, to the private utility company.

Giefer: What was Hyatt's relationship to the private power people?

Leedom: It was good, I would say. He recognized their position

Leedom: fully. They recognized his position fully. I do not believe that there was any personal enmity between them. They recognized that it was Hyatt's job to promote the project as a state project. He recognized their position as a private utility attempting to protect its own interest.

On this public and private power deal, one of the lessons I learned when I went with the Water Project Authority was that there is no such thing as cheap public power. I was a newspaper man. Invariably I had used the word "cheap" in describing public power. It is just like describing the delta lands. You never refer to them as other than the "rich delta lands." So it was always "cheap public power." It was not until I went to the Water Project Authority, when under Bartlett's direction and Edmonston's direction this study of public power systems was being made, that the basic principle of power was fully developed for me: that it cost just as much to develop a kilowatt of power by hydro or steam whether it is public or private, except with private power you probably have a little higher efficiency in economics of the development of that power. This is assuming that in the establishment of two hydro-plants on two identical rivers, one by a public agency and one by a private agency, the kilowatt development in the private agency's power house costs just as much as the public power house's and vice-versa.

(Interview No. 3, February 17, 1966)

Hyatt and Edmonston

Leedom: Well, I think in order to develop the background on the Hyatt-Edmonston relationship, it is necessary to go back to the early 1920's. Ed Hyatt was made Deputy Chief of the Water Commission in 1922. He became Chief of the Division of Water Rights in 1924. At this time there was a very definite move in California to put the state in the business of developing its water and power resources.

Under the leadership of the League of the California Municipalities there was drafted in 1921 a so-called Water and Power Act which was placed on the Initiative ballot in 1922. This initiative would have granted the state the power to engage in the development of not only its water resources, but the power that could be generated in that connection.

This bond issue was defeated in 1922. It was brought up again in 1924 and defeated,and again in 1926 and defeated.

I think that one of the controlling factors in the defeat of these bond issues was the fact that the state had no definite plan for the development of its water resources. The recognition of this need was expressed by the legislature in 1927 when it created the Division of Water Resources, and made an appropriation to the state engineer for surveys and studies leading to a master plan for the development of water in California.

Leedom: Now it must be remembered that Hyatt in connection with the Water Rights Commission of necessity came in contact with virtually every leader in California's water development because every irrigation district, reclamation district, and water district of any kind almost invariably ran into difficulties over its water rights. It was necessary to refer many questions to the Water Rights Commission.

Along in connection with this, undoubtedly the Division was very much interested in having the state engaged actively in the development of its latent water resources.

In 1924, Bob Edmonston came into the Division. He had been in construction work as an engineer in irrigation works, building dams and other hydroelectric developments. While Hyatt was largely engaged in making the necessary contact--political, financial, and otherwise, to put the state in the water and power business, Edmonston from 1924 until 1927 was engaged in the engineering work which was to lead to the California Water Plan, or rather the State Water Plan they called it, the State Water Plan of 1931.

Hyatt became State Engineer in 1927. From then on he, except for advisory work, left the engineering largely up to Edmonston who became his deputy in 1927. Edmonston was a man who could accomplish a great deal of work on his own. He never depended fully on anyone else's figures.

Leedom: He had to go through the figures himself before he was satisfied that they could be put into print, or published in a bulletin. He was meticulous about this. This meticulousness in checking the engineering figures and data stayed with him constantly until the time of his retirement in1955.

Because of the nature of his work, he was completely sold on the idea that the state itself could develop its own water resources...whenever the problem was beyond the reach of the individual agencies, such as irrigation districts, East-Bay Utilities, San Francisco's Hetch Hetchy and the Metropolitan Water District in Southern California.

There is another factor which should be brought into this discussion and that is the Legislature Joint Interim Water Committee. This committee was created in 1927. Bradford S. Crittenden of Stockton, then an assemblyman, was named chairman of this committee. The committee held meetings throughout the state during the periods between the sessions of the legislature, which then occurred only every two years. They sounded out the feelings at the grass roots and obtained information on what various localities felt should be done on the development of water resources. At regular two year intervals they reported their findings to the legislature.

It devolved upon Crittenden's Committee therefore to make recommendations to the legislature which could or would put the state in the business of developing its water.

Leedom: When Bulletin 25 was issued in 1931, it was endorsed by the joint legislative committee. That is the real beginning of the Central Valley Project as it is now known. The project was laid out in detail in Bulletin 25. Crittenden authored the bill which would authorize the state to build the Central Valley Project and authorized a $170,000,000 bond issue for this purpose.

Hyatt, of course, played a tremendous part in getting that act passed by the legislature, and in defeating the referendum which would have recalled the act of the legislature. At that time the United States and the world at large was at the height of a terrific depression. There was a question of whether there would be a market for the $170,000,000 bond issue. President Roosevelt had been elected and started his reversal of the depression through innumerable measures designed to pull the nation's economy up by its bootstraps with liberal doses of federal financial assistance. It was only natural that the state would turn to the federal government to assist the financing of the Central Valley Project. There was a large degree of flood control involved. Under federal law the state was entitled to a contribution from the United States government for the flood control and navigation values involved in the project. The project was studied by a number of federal agencies and eventually President Roosevelt made an emergency appropriation to initiate the construction of Friant Dam, which was putting the cart before the horse.

Leedom: When this was pointed out to the Secretary of the Interior and the President, that appropriation was reversed and made for the construction of any part of the project.

I have gone over the fact that the federal government, except for the state data, had no data of its own. Therefore, they entered into a series of cooperative contracts with the state. The first of these was signed by Elwood Mead as Reclamation Commissioner. Mead was a true conservationist. He fortunately was not of a bureaucratic type of mind. He didn't demand that it be done by his bureau or not at all. If you look back at the feasibility report on state ownership and operation of the Central Valley Project, you will find in the first cooperative contract a definite assurance on the part of the federal government that the state would participate, if not in the construction at least in the operation of the project once it was completed. I quote from the first memorandum of understanding which was signed in January of 1936 by Mead. It says: "It is contemplated that at the earliest practicable date a contract will be entered into between the United States and the Water Project Authority, providing for, but not limited to: (a)The operation and maintenance by the authority of useful units of project, upon presenting assurance of payment satisfactory to the United States of the cost thereof."* This was a very definite statement on the part of the federal government that the state was expected to take over, operate, and maintain the project if

*California State Water Project Authority, Feasibility of State ownership and operation of the Central Valley Project of California (1952), p. 22.

Leedom: it could pay the costs of the project, that is assure repayment of the cost of the project.

In the second and third supplemental contracts between the state and the federal government, the language that I have just read was changed to: "It is contemplated that at the earliest practical date and as soon as permitted by law,a contract will be entered into, ... " etc.* That was the first hedge on the part of the federal government, the seven words--"and as soon as permitted by law."

However, up until 1939 the state still held hope that it would be permitted to maintain and operate the project after its completion. In 1939 though,Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes wrote a letter to the Authority, dated April 13, 1939, which contained the final hedge. He says: "Federal reclamation laws,as construed by the Department of the Interior, especially with respect to the principal part of the irrigation water made available from a project,require that repayment contracts shall be made only with agencies which have the power directly to assess and to create liens on the property of water users. It was the understanding of the Secretary that the Water Project Authority does not have such power and therefore it is doubtful if the authority could be the contracting agency for the purchase of the principal part of the water supply to be made available for the project." He ended up by saying, "I suggest that you explore further the possibilities,and

*Ibid.

Leedom: I would appreciate receipt of any concrete plan which may be evolved. I assure you that I consider your efforts to be worthy of encouragement,and I pledge my active cooperation in any plan which will lead to the maximum public benefit."*

That was a nice face-saving statement which did not mean a thing because nothing concrete developed from further exchanges in letters. It was clearly evident to Hyatt and to the governor and to the Water Project Authority that the federal government had no intention whatsoever of releasing any part of the Central Valley Project to the state.

Giefer: Had they any way of knowing before they got this letter that this was in the wind?

Leedom: Yes, with each of the contracts between the state and the federal government it became more difficult on the part of the state to get the federal government to give them any assurance. It was a graduated step-by-step elimination process.

Hyatt, as the man who fought the battles in Washington and Sacramento, of course, was very disappointed that the Project for which he had worked and lived and fought for so many years was taken out of the hands of the state.

Edmonston in the background was intensely bitter. His references to the Bureau of Reclamation are not for the record. They were far from complimentary.

However, I will say this for Ed Hyatt, and for Edmonston

*Ibid., p. 23.

Leedom: when he became State Engineer, both consistently fought for adequate appropriations for the project. In fact, I believe in a number of cases they urged larger appropriations from Congress for the project than was actually sought by the Bureau of Reclamation or the Department of the Interior. Hyatt never, in any public appearance, indicated that he was otherwise than perfectly happy with the construction of the project by the federal government. If he felt as though he had been shoved aside by a more powerful agency, he never made a point of it in meetings either public or private as far as I can remember.

I do remember one day after a particularly long session of negotiations, Hyatt made the off-hand remark that, "You know, we have some 8,000 or 10,000 years of written history, and so far as I can see, man has changed very little in that time. We have not done away with greed or avarice or lust for power." But that was purely in a private conversation and not in character with his public statements at any time.

Giefer: He did have a public face then, didn't he?

Leedom: His position, I believe, was that he recognized the terrific need for the project in California and he would rather it was built by the federal government, if necessary, than not built at all. It was the lesser of the two evils.

Even in 1940, when the state was trying to set up its little CVA (Central Valley Authority) for the purpose

Leedom: of handling the water and power from the project, hope for state participation in the project had not diminished. In the background, Hyatt and Edmonston were working on a plan by which the state could actually buy out the Central Valley Project. In 1951, there had been a Senate concurrent resolution introduced, asking the Water Project Authority to report to the legislature not later than June 15, 1951 on the status of studies relative to the future ownership and operation of the Central Valley Project by the state, and to furnish to the legislature by 1952 a report on the legal and financial feasibility of the state's assuming ownership.

In the Budget Bill of 1952, there was included an item of $10,000,000 for the acquisition of the Central Valley Project by the state on a self liquidating basis, in other words to pay the initial installments.

Edmonston produced the feasibility report in 1952. It was a very comprehensive report which covered not only the cost of the project, but the proposals for financing it by the state, the legal steps that would be necessary, in fact, a complete diagram of how and why--how the state could assume ownership of the project and at what cost. In that report incidentally, it was shown that the project authorized by the state at a cost of approximately $170,000,000 under the Bureau's construction program and with the addition of Folsom Dam had mounted from $170,000,000 to $635,000,000.

Even at this figure the report showed that the state

Leedom: could purchase the project, pay off the cost and be making money by about the year 1995 or the year 2000. Revenues would then pay for the entire project and the state would be out of the red by that time.

But as I say, prior to 1952 or subsequent to the issuance of the feasibility report, it was quite evident that the state was not going to be able to lay hands on the project.

However, Edmonston long had been working on a much broader plan, a plan which is now known as the California Water Plan, comprising the construction of the Oroville Dam on the Feather River and the Tehachapi pumping plants which would take water from northern California clear down to the Mexican border, San Diego County.

I think I had better tell you a little about Bob Edmonston. He probably had one of the best creative engineering brains in the state. When he drew up the California Water Plan in rough outline, this was before the engineering data had been compiled on it, the engineers in the Division called it the Paul Bunyan plan. It...

Giefer: When was he working on this approximately?

Leedom: Studies for this plan were given initial authorization by the legislature of 1947, chapter 1541. Plans were developed in the ten years from 1947 until 1957 by the staff of the Division of Water Resources, first under the direction of Hyatt, until his retirement in 1950, and then under the direction of Edmonston, until his retirement in 1955. There

Leedom: was no dam too high or too wide or too big for Edmonston's imagination. The Eel River Dam proposed in this plan, I believe, would be the largest dam in the world. This would be the largest dam in the world of any kind. The Feather River Dam at Oroville is probably the largest structure of its kind to date. I am not sure if there is a larger one in Russia or not. It certainly is larger than anything in Europe, Africa, the United States, or Canada.

Bob never overlooked the possibility of following the highest line for transportation of water. As a matter of fact, in some respects, he resembled Robert Marshall, except Bob's plan was usually to put the main canals at a higher elevation.

I remember one day we were driving out to the airport in San Francisco. He had the driver pull off the road and turn back up behind Candlestick Park. He pointed out a highway route over the top of the hills which would lead directly from the Golden Gate Bridge to Candlestick Park and how a bridge could be placed across the Bay at that point. There would be practically no interference with residential development and very little interference with industry down on the Bayshore because you would bridge over the industry. Later he proposed this route to George McCoy, the Chief Engineer of the Division of Highways, but it was too much for George to swallow. However, it would have made a very logical and fine direct route. At

Leedom: that time there was virtually nothing on top of those hills from the Golden Gate right across to the bay. You would have dropped down off the hills and you would have had a brand new crossing of the bay. It would be able to feed direct from the north coast into the San Joaquin Valley with practically no interference in San Francisco traffic.

As I say, he probably had the finest engineering brain of anybody I ever knew. Yet, basically there was a strain of the college boy in him--he never got over his college days once he was away from his desk. Every year, unfailing, he made a great deal of Guy Fawkes Day. It took me some time to figure out just why he was so jubilant on Guy Fawkes Day until I remembered Guy Fawkes had tried to burn down the Parliament. I think that's why Edmonston admired Guy Fawkes. Edmonston had a suspicious view of politicians. Hyatt on the other hand was a very fluent speaker and at ease in any company. Edmonston spoke with great difficulty. For a man with so fine a background in engineering, and well educated in other fields, he was inarticulate in the extreme when he made a public appearance. He dreaded having to go before committees and the legislature.

As a matter of fact, a Congressional Committee was out in California looking into something. I have forgotten what their purpose was but Clair Engle was the Chairman of the Committee, or acting chairman here in California.

Leedom: They were meeting over in the Capitol Building and notified Bob that he was to appear before them at ten o'clock on the following morning. Well, Bob was busy with something else at the moment so he sent Tom Waddell, his assistant, to appear in his behalf. Engle was not only shocked at this disregard for a Congressional Committee, but he was terribly angry about it. They were going to charge Bob with contempt of Congress if he did not appear immediately. Finally Edmonston,most unwillingly, appeared before the committee.

He had a habit when among convivial friends of cutting off neck ties--a pure college boy stunt that you would not expect of an engineer of his stature.

I remember one time when we went down to Texas to a National Reclamation Association meeting. At that time, Edmonston had been appointed State Engineer, was President of the Western State's Engineers, and it was necessary for him to make several talks before the Association. There was a dinner given one evening which everyone foresaw as a very stuffy affair, so Bob and a number of his cronies, Arvin Shaw, Ray Matthews, a couple of engineers from Los Angeles, a party of about eight, went to a place that specialized in Texas steaks on the outskirts of the city rather than going to the NRA dinner. The evening was quite convivial. As we left this steak house, there was a broken piece of curbing that weighed all of thirty pounds lying beside the sidewalk. Bob picked it up, trundled it into

Leedom: his car, took it back to the hotel with him, got a bell-boy, had it nicely wrapped in paper and had it delivered at two o'clock in the morning to Charley Kaupke's door. Kaupke of course was furious at being awakened at two o'clock in the morning to get a thirty pound curb stone. The funny part of it was that C.A. Griffith, Chairman of the State Water Resources Board at the time and also at this convention, blamed me to his dying day for being at the bottom of this rock for Charley Kaupke business. He never suspected Bob Edmonston. Incidentally on that trip I was hired by Edmonston at a salary of $0.00. Every time I would turn out a resolution or finish a speech for him, or do another task, he would add another zero to my salary. Finally he boasted that he had an assistant whose salary ran into six figures.

Bob worked himself to death. As I say, he was very meticulous, checking everything. Everything had to be checked by him in detail. The last six months in office, I think, he worked maybe 16 hours a day on Bulletin 3 and the other things that were necessary for him to do. But he had to check every figure in Bulletin 3, the California Water Plan. Of course, it was necessary for him to retire because of his health, but that was only part of it. He was not on particularly friendly terms with the governor, but health was actually the basis because he only lived about 8 months after he retired. He was a sick man all during that time.

Giefer: This was"Goody"Knight?

Leedom: That was Knight, yes. Knight, you know, would call you over for a conference to be briefed on some water problem here or elsewhere. The minute you walked in, he started talking to you and you never got to tell him anything. He was peculiar that way.

Giefer: How did Edmonston take his elevation to State Engineer?

Leedom: He welcomed it, I think, from the standpoint that it gave him free reign on building this giant California Water Plan. Of course, this thing is not only the Feather River Project; it involved diversion of the Klamath River, the Eel River. It covers the whole state; it is truly a California Water Plan, and a tremendous thing. Except for a few engineers, people do not recognize the magnitude of the job that was done under his direction. He was, I think, very happy to become State Engineer, although he dreaded the public end of it. He disliked having to go before the Finance Committee and the Ways and Means Committee. He dreaded most of the appearances that are necessary... the State Engineer is always at the Irrigation District Association meetings, the NRA, innumerable meetings all up and down the state. His presence is almost obligatory at these things. That part of the job I know that he thorougly disliked. The engineering part he reveled in.

Giefer: When you say,"He welcomed the post," had he in any way in the last years of Hyatt's administration chaffed under the...

Leedom: No, he and Hyatt got along swell. He was very happy to

Leedom: have Ed out there in front; he wanted no part of that at all. As I way, from 1947 on he was working on his "baby." It was going to be the California Water Plan. The last three years of Hyatt's state engineership, Edmonston was completely immersed in the studies that were leading to the California Water Plan. They had put up a Quonset hut on some property over across the Sacramento River to house the increased staff that was necessary to work on this California Water Plan...Bob would have been happier working there than working in the front office.

California Water Commission

Giefer: Well, it sounds to me as though in the period, say, 1925 to 1950, the pivotal figures were Edmonston, Hyatt and Crittenden.

Leedom: I would say so. Of course, before Crittenden...well, they were the pivotal figures; there was no doubt about that. In addition to these three pivotal men, the influence of the California Water Resources Commission appointed by Governor Rolph in 1931 shouldn't be overlooked: Arthur B. Tarby; Shannon Crandall; Matt Sullivan--he was the chairman from San Fransisco and a bosom friend of Governor Rolph; James Burke, a Visalia water attorney; Jesse Poundstone from up around Colusa; R.C. Hardison who was also from up in the valley, I believe; Francis Carr from Redding, an attorney; Colonel Barton who was the manager of the State Reclamation Board; and of course, Ed as ex-

Leedom: officio member of that commission. That commission probably gave more prestige to the Central Valley Project than any other subsequent or former commission.

Giefer: Can we say something about this commission, some of the relations between the legislature and the commission?

Leedom: I don't know much about the commission except that it formed a political front statewide for Jimmy Rolph in favor of the Central Valley Project. The Joint Legislature Interim Committee on Water Problems, however, was a different thing. The committee's purpose was to go out in the grass roots and find out the sentiment of the people and build up sentiment for whatever the committee believed was necessary. They didn't only meet in the Sacramento Valley and the San Joaquin Valley where there was a very definite need for additional water supplies, they made tours up the north coast where you have terrific flood control problems and they toured southern California.

I think over the years from 1927 up until his retirement in about 1952, Crittenden was the chief waterwheel in the legislature. The Interim Committee is still in existence, I believe, with Carley Porter and Mrs. Davis. Porter is the man who has replaced Senator Crittenden. I don't know whether Grunsky is on that committee or not, but it still is a very active committee.

Giefer: I am not sure whether an "Interim Committee" still exists.

Leedom: They call it the "Joint Legislative Water Committee," I think.

Giefer: Colby, in the Senate.

Leedom: Colby from Merced, yes. I don't know who else is on though.

Giefer: Is there a distinction to be made here about engineers dominating...

Leedom: Well, the Water Authority was set up for a very specific purpose, only to handle the Central Valley Project and maintenance operation of the Project. When the 1944 Flood Control Act was passed by the Congress which spread the Flood control activities of the federal government over a much wider field than it had been under the Corps of Engineers, there was no state agency prepared to undertake the survey of new flood control projects and what would be required as local contribution.

I know Crittenden introduced a bill which set up the California Water Commission; it was the State Water Board at the time. He got an appropriation for distribution to these local agencies to assist in the local contribution required under the 1944 code, but it was an entirely new field of endeavor. The State Reclamation Board, while it had power to act on the Sacramento River flood control project, didn't have power to go outside of that. The Water Authority could only deal with the Central Valley Project. That is why the State Water Resources Board was created. Of course, that has evolved from an agency which reviews these projects and hands out the money to an entirely different thing. Now it deals with approval of the rights of way for the Feather River Project and basic water problems statewide.

Leedom: There was no conflict though. The Authority could not function as was required under the federal law, nor could the Reclamation Board so they set up a brand new agency.

(Interview No. 4, September 2, 1966)

State Water Resources Board

I think earlier I mentioned the fact that Governor Warren was deeply interested in water development in California. He, as Attorney General, was a member of the Water Project Authority and became very familiar with the efforts of the Authority to develop the Central Valley Project. At the 1944 session of Congress, the Rivers and Harbors Bill was adopted as a post-war construction program to take up any sudden slacking off in employment nationwide. The Act authorized the expenditure of $400 million for rivers and harbors and flood control projects nationwide. The 1944 Act authorized construction by the Corps of Engineers of eleven multiple purpose and five flood control reservoirs and related and supplemental channel and levee improvements in the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys; a number of projects in Southern California, including the Los Angeles Flood Control Project, and development of San Diego Mission Bay Project; and the Pajaro project in Monterey County. All of these projects were then re-authorized by the State. When the Federal Flood Control Act of 1944 was adopted by the Congress, a portion

State Water Resources Board--Circa 1957

left to right: Kenneth Q. Volk, Los Angeles; Everett L. Grubb, Kleinore; John P. Bunker, Gustine; Sam R. Leedom, Administrative Assistant, Sacramento; W.P. Rich, Marysville; Arnold Frew, vice-chairman, King City; Clair A. Hill, chairman, Redding.

Leedom: of the Act provided that, in order to obtain the federal funds for construction of these projects, it would be necessary for local agencies to contribute costs of rights-of-way and a certain portion of the projects' costs. There was not statewide provision in California for doing this. Senator Bradford Crittenden at Governor Warren's suggestion and with his assistance, had introduced in the legislature a State Water Resources Act of 1945. It became Chapter 1514. This Act authorized the State's contributions in the sum of $30 million to assist local agencies in the purchase of the rights-of-way provided for in the Federal Flood Control Act of 1944. The Act also set up the State Water Resources Board and gave it wide authority, not only in allocating funds to the flood control projects authorized in the state and federal acts, but wide powers in integrating and directing at state level the development of water resources projects of all types. It was the first time that a commission or board had been set up for this purpose. Prior to that the state had the Reclamation Board, which dealt only with the Sacramento River and San Joaquin River delta flood control developments. The Board was to be statewide in nature; that is, representative of all factions of the state.

In November, 1945, Governor Warren appointed a seven-man board which was geographically representative of the entire state. Ex-congressman Phil Swing of San Diego was appointed; Howard F. Cozzens, the County Engineer from

Leedom: Monterey County represented the coast section. Roy V. Meikle of Turlock represented the middle San Joaquin section of the state. Lester Ready of San Fransisco was an electrical consultant with state wide connections, and B.A. Etcheverry, Professor Emeritus from the University of California, of course, had very wide water development experience. Royal Miller of Sacramento was at that time the head of the Sacramento Municipal Utility District, and I believe he still is now. The terms of the Board were staggered and allocated by lottery. Royal Miller was elected the first chairman of the Water Resources Board. Shortly after the Board was appointed, Ed Hyatt came to me and asked me if I would serve as the administrative assistant for the board. At that time I was head of a public relations firm in Sacramento, and I had just completed writing for Brad Crittenden of the Joint Legislative Committee on Water Problems a report to the legislature. He reported bi-annually on the activities of the joint committee. I had been giving them a hand on these reports from the time I was with the Water Project Authority, with a lapse during the time I was in the service. As I think I mentioned before, my experience with the Water Project Authority was not altogether happy in that I found it a frustrating job because of the political divisions on the Authority. I was doing quite well in the public relations firm, and was not very enthusiastic about going back into state service, but Ed was a very presuasive gentleman, as

Leedom: was Royal Miller, and they assured me that this would be an entirely different set-up. There was no division among the appointees politically, and they thought I would find it a very congenial and interesting job. Anyway, I was ready to give them a hand. The Governor had called a statewide conference for December 6 and 7, 1945, and had invited every agency that had anything to do with water in California to attend. That meant irrigation districts, flood control projects, reclamation projects, multiple purpose projects such as the Central Valley Project. It included the Corps of Engineers, the Bureau of Reclamation, the Soil Conservation Service, National Resources, Fish and Game, Forestry; in fact, everyone that had anything to do with our natural resources development.

It required a good deal of leg work to get this conference organized. While I had not yet accepted the definite job with the Board, I lent my service to Ed to help him because all of the arrangements fell on his shoulders. From the middle of November until the conference, I worked steadily.

Giefer: Was this conference the Governor's idea?

Leedom: The Governor called the conference. The purpose of this was to introduce to all the agencies the new State Water Resources Board, the newly appointed State Water Resources Board, and focus attention upon them and their activities in trying to integrate a statewide program of water development.

Leedom: Very few people recognized the importance of the Act which the legislature had passed, its far-reaching effect on water development in California. The Board was empowered to initiate studies anywhere in the state that they felt were feasible and desirable, that is, economically and otherwise--necessary projects.

In addition, the legislature had set aside $30 million for use by the Board in allocating funds to local agencies where they thought it was necessary to make a contribution on the federal flood control projects. This subsequently ran into many millions more than the original appropriations. They had to add to that subsequently. I think they are still in the process of paying local contributions.

Giefer: In the formation of the Board, can you say anything about the forces that were involved? There were Warren, Crittenden, and Hyatt?

Leedom: Hyatt, of course, recognized the importance of the 1944 Flood Control Act. He and Crittenden had worked closely together over many years on water legislation. When Hyatt brought to the Governor's attention the importance of the Federal Flood Control Act of 1944 and its bearing on the projects proposed in California, Warren immediately and very enthusiastically supported the Crittenden Bill in the legislature. Actually, I don't believe there was very much opposition to the legislation. It was generally recognized that the state was going to have to make some provision for an integration at the state level of the

Leedom: projects proposed and the financing, because in most cases, the local agencies didn't have funds sufficient to make the local contribution. Take, for instance, Los Angeles County--the rights-of-way for the Los Angeles Flood Control Project had already run into millions and millions of dollars. I think Colonel Hedger testified at one time that for the flood control project, the Los Angeles County Flood Control District had put up more money on its own than the combined contributions of the state and federal governments. San Bernardino County had a flood control project which was very costly from the standpoint of rights-of-way. On the Sacramento River flood control project, for another instance, the local agencies didn't have the money to provide these rights-of-way, but through the Reclamation Board they had been allocated state money. So there was a precedent for assisting these other projects statewide.

I think it was generally recognized that the Act was a necessary step at that time.

The chairman of the original board recognized immediately the importance of the provisions of the Act in providing a stepping stone to engage the state actively in the development of its water resources. He was even willing to have the Board tackle the very controversial and almost unsolvable problem of flood plain zoning. The problem still isn't solved twenty years later and probably will never be solved. But I cite that to give you an idea of the

Leedom: boldness of the thinking of the Board members at that time.

Miller was a fine organizer. He believed in getting everybody in under the same tent, and instead of striking out single-handedly, to try to bring the various groups together in a unit to not only get authorizations for additional flood control projects in California, but each year to obtain sufficient appropriations for the projects that were already authorized. At his insistence, the representatives of the various statewide flood control projects were called into conference with the board and asked to present to the board what they felt were their needs for the following year in the way of federal and state appropriations. Out of that was formed the California Flood Control Conference, a body of men who represented the various flood control projects up and down the state. Each of these agencies had been in the habit of going back to Washington, sending two or three men every year and making a single-handed appearance before Congress. It was like shooting at a pin-point with a blunderbuss. They scattered their shots all through the hearings. Miller insisted they all get together and present all of it as one program and each agency would support the other's program. He was successful in doing this, and the fact that the Board took the trouble to screen these requests for federal funds prior to the appearance before the House and Senate Appropriations committees made a good impression on the committees before which these people appeared. Instead of

Leedom: appearing over a period of six weeks to two months, the Board arranged that they could all be heard on a single day at a single hearing. After, I think, the first year that we went back to Washington, it was necessary to make two trips because we couldn't get the House and Senate heraings synchronized so that we could make a single appearance. However, the second year that we appeared there we were able to have the hearings held in tandem so that we made a single trip back to Washington. It was a big savings to local agencies from the standpoint of expense and to the Water Resources Board itself.

Miller also immediately recognized the necessity of getting this program underway very early so that the Board itself could go to the Bureau of the Budget with the proposed program and screen it with the Bureau, because actually the first word and the last word is with this Bureau. If the Bureau of the Budget says you are asking too much money, there is very little likelihood that you are going to get any more than the Bureau will go for. So it was arranged that the local agencies would appear before the Board, say in July, with the proposals they were going to take back to Congress the following spring. With that information, arrangements were made with the Bureau of the Budget, and usually the chairman and myself as executive officer of the Board, Hyatt or Edmonston, and frequently one or two members of the other agencies, usually Hedger from the Los Angeles District because it required

Leedom: the largest appropriation, and always a member of the Reclamation Board to represnet the Sacramento River Flood Control Project, five or six of us would go back and meet with two or three key people of the Bureau of the Budget and go through these projects one by one with them. We would say, "this is what the local agencies think they will require, but this is what we think the Corps can spend on the project Do you think it is reasonable?"

The Board would subsequently adopt a program that was approved by all the members at the conference. In federal appropriations it would run up to $100 million a year, California alone. You must remember that the original federal act had provided only $400 million for all of these projects nationwide. So California was bucking the Mississippi River and all of the rivers and harbors projects in the East and the South, and you must remember that those committees in Washington were then and still are largely controlled by seniority. Most of the seniority was in the South, so we had very stiff competition to buck on the basis of the amount we were asking. The Board was surprisingly successful in obtaining the amounts they were after. Usually Congress would appropriate in the final bill virtually what the Board had asked for. The deficiencies were largely in appropriation for additional studies for getting new projects initiated. The going projects by and large were allocated what the Bureau of the Budget and the Corps of Engineers had said

Leedom: the Army could efficiently spend on the budget.

I think that that covers the initiation of the State Water Resources Board and the part that Warren and Hyatt played in it. Of course, the Board undertook regional studies and was allocated funds liberally by the legislature to conduct these studies, and the results of the Board's initial studies have shown in what we now call the California Water Plan and the Feather River Project, which is now far advanced and will be delivering water to Southern California in another three years.

Giefer: The state Water Resources Board as such lasted until 1955?

Leedom: No, I think it was 1956 perhaps. Well, they changed the title of it, and the powers of the Board--I am not sure about this--but in following the proceedings of the Board, it appears to me that the powers have been whittled away or transferred to the point that it now is more or less a rubber stamp for the Director of the Department of Water Resources.

The allocation of funds for these flood control projects is now a department activity. I do not believe that they now initiate any more studies. The title has now been changed to the California Water Commission. I think a lot of changes in the Act were made at the time the Division was made a Department, and the powers that were originally invested in the board are now more or less invested in the Director. This was in 1956. The Water Board continued in DWR, Division of Water Resources.

Giefer: You were with them until----when did you retire?

Leedom: 1957. I was with the Board from 1945 until November, 1957.

Giefer: The Board met in Sacramento?

Leedom: We met all over the state. The headquarters was in Sacramento, and most of the routine meetings were held there. But they made it a point to hold meetings throughout the state, particularly in areas where there was a proposed new federal project. For instance, they met several times in Santa Rosa and Ukiah and on up the coast, even in Crescent City. They met in San Diego, down in the Imperial Valley; they held meetings in the Mojave Desert. They held meetings all through the Mother Lode. I would say virtually in every part of the state, wherever there was a problem, they would go and hold a public hearing.

Back in the very early days of the Board, I think in 1946, or '47, there was wide dissension in Los Angeles County over the construction of the Whittier Narrows Dam, with the district just about evenly divided on how the dam should be built and where. Everyone admitted that it was necessary, but nobody wanted it built the way the district wanted to build it. It happened that they had a freshman Congressman down there, by the name of Richard Nixon, who was right in the middle of it. So the Board held a hearing down in Whittier and heard all sides of the question and testimony from the Los Angeles County Flood Control District as to what problems were involved. They decided to support

Leedom: the district in its proposal. I remember well going with Royal Miller into Dick Nixon's office in Washington, and Miller, who was not always a diplomat, laid it on the line to Nixon as to what the Board's decision was. He told him in so many words, "Now Mr. Nixon you have to get off the middle and go along with us." The sweat broke out on Nixon's forehead; he was a very troubled young man, because his district was split 50-50. Any way he went he was in trouble, but he did support the Board and the district on the solution of the Whittier Narrows problem.

Royal Miller, the first chairman of the Water Resources Board, was a very successful businessman. He had a large automobile agency in Sacramento and branches in half a dozen towns up the valley. In Redding, Willows, Chico, there was a Miller and somebody else. He had interest in Dodge firms up and down the Valley. He was an enthusiastic supporter of public development of water and power resources in the state. He also understood organization, and he insisted that when we went back to Washington we go at least three days early in order to make a personal call on each member of the California delegation in the House and to the two Senators. We made calls on the Corps of Engineers, a courtesy call at the Bureau of the Budget, and usually courtesy calls on the members of the Appropriations Committee. This involved a great deal of corridor traffic, but the effect was good because it brought to the attention

Leedom: of the Congressmen the activities of the Board, and the Board's objectives. In addition to that, it served another purpose. The time before the Appropriations Committee is limited, and in the California delegation alone there would usually be some 30 to 40 people, all wanting to appear before the committee. Where you have that many people on about 20 to 30 projects, it becomes a question as to how much time can be devoted to each project. When the Clerk of the committee said, "The committee will allocate three hours tomorrow morning or day after tomorrow for your appearance; that's the best we can do for you," Miller would hold a meeting of the delegation in his room at the Statler Hotel. He always had a suite and made it the headquarters of the California delegation; then he would inform them how much time the group had and almost arbitrarily set up a time limit for each project so that each project representative did have time to appear before the committee. He had them limit their statement to as short a period as possible and then present a written statement with the statistics and data necessary to back up their statement. This was an entirely new approach to the question of hearings, and in spite of the fact that it arbitrarily cut some of the delegations down to much less time than they desired, they took it in stride and agreed to go along with it because they soon discovered it was the most effective way of making a presentation in Washington. As a result of Miller's organization along

Leedom: these lines, invariably when the delegation had finished the presentation, the committee chairman complimented the California delegation on the manner in which it made its presentation. I believe it also impressed other committee members.

Miller served, I believe, two years as chairman. Then he had a rather severe heart attack and found that he would not be able to keep up the pace necessary as chairman and resigned. C.A. Griffith of Azusa, who had been president of the Azusa Foothill Citrus Company, a large development on the outskirts of Los Angeles, became chairman.

Azusa Foothill Citrus Company was one of the last large holdings to give way to the residential encroachment. It was a corporation with stockholders, and they held out a long time against the general encroachment from the outside, but eventually the imbalance between the returns from the orange groves and nut trees and lemons grew so large that they began to sell off.

Griffith was an entirely different personality from Royal Miller, who was very much the hard-nosed businessman. Griffith approached things strictly diplomatically. He was a very kindly person and very well versed in water problems. He had been engaged in that San Gabriel development, which was the source of the water supply for the Azusa Foothill Citrus Company, and had a very good background in water development in general in the state. Clair Hill was appointed to serve and served until I retired in

Leedom: 1957. He was still serving when I retired. I think he retired from the Board and was placed on the State Engineering Board in 1958--the Board that qualifies engineers as to state regulations. I believe Arnold Frew, who was active in the Walnut Growers' Association and several other agricultural associations, succeeded Lester Ready when he passed away. Frew came from King City. I might say that during all my term as administrative officer of the Board, I found the appointments made to the Board, largely filling vacancies caused by the death of the members of termination of term, were all very high caliber men. Without exception they had a wide knowledge of the water problems in California and viewed them, not from a local standpoint, but from a statewide standpoint. Roy Meikle, an original member of the Board, of course, had been chief engineer of the Turlock Irrigation District almost from its creation and still is consulting engineer for that Board. His life-long dream of building new Don Pedro is nearing fruition now in 1966. I believe they have an appropriation for the initiation of construction in the budget this year. Phil Swing, the ex-congressman from San Diego, was co-author of the bill which authorized the construction of Boulder Dam and had a very extensive knowledge of the water problems in Southern California. He was in law practice in San Diego. He engaged, I think up to the time of his death, in the long, drawnout Fallbrook case. They were suing the federal government to retain

Leedom: some of the water for local use instead of allocating it all to the marine base. He also had a very wide knowledge of the Colorado River problems, having initiated legislation, the Swing-Johnson Bill. I have a little anecdote about that. Hiram Johnson was a very fine gentleman and a very great diplomat. Swing as a young congressman was very enthusiastic, and also very verbose and inclined to talk out of turn at times. There was a conference to be held on the Swing-Johnson Bill authorizing federal participation in the Boulder Dam project. As the story goes, Hiram Johnson said, "Now Phil, when we get in this conference, I would like to have you sit next to me because I'll need your assistance in dealing with these people." So Swing sat on Johnson's right. During the conference there arrived a moment when there was a question as to which way the decision might go. Swing started to open his mouth and Johnson reached over, stepped on his foot, and said, "Phil, will you hand me that paper?"

With his vast background and experience in water problems in California, B.A. Etcheverry's Board was invaluable. I recall when they first proposed a project of a fresh water barrier down in Los Angeles County as a means of holding back the salt water intrusion, the Board financed this project through appropriations to the Board for the Los Angeles Flood Control District. The district purchased the water, and the board provided funds for

Leedom: sinking the wells and pumping this fresh water underground. At each meeting there would be a report on the progress of building this fresh water barrier. I recall that Professor Etcheverry used to look at the figures very carefully and ask some very probing questions about how much of this water was being wasted seaward and how much of it was actually building up the barrier. He asked a lot of questions that were difficult to answer. I do believe that that barrier did eventually work out, and that they are now planning another up in the Ventura Section. I think instead of using Colorado River water on it now, they are using reclaimed sewage water, but I am not sure about this. Etcheverry's approach to every problem was very scholarly, but he also had a fine sense of humor. Quite frequently when the Board was involved in a long and tiresome discussion of some problem, it was Etcheverry who relieved the pressure with some jokes of his own. He always could come up with a bright saying or a light turn of affairs to make it look a little more possible or probable of solution. I think the Board suffered one of its greatest losses from the standpoint of an advisory mind when Professor Etcheverry passed away.

In addition to him, there was Howard Cozzens from down in Monterey. He had the longest record as County Engineer of any engineer in California. Unfortunately for Howard, one of the first projects the Board had to tackle was on the Pajaro River rebuilding some old levees

Leedom: down there to project some very rich farmlands. The Pajaro is a very strange river. It can rise and disappear in the sand, and rise again, during a summertime. But in winter it produces a lot of water and it did cause considerable damage down there. While the farmers wanted the flood protection, they also wanted to preserve all the land they could, and when it came to the purchase of these lands from them for their own protection, they demanded the very highest price that they could possibly get. This was embarrassing to Howard.

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Gerald J. Giefer

Born in St. Paul, Minnesota; undergraduate degree (1950) in English literature from the College of St. Thomas, St. Paul; graduate degree (1951) in Library Science from the University of Minnesota; has worked with the libraries of Highlands University, Las Vegas, New Mexico (1951-53); University of Minnesota (1953-55); Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, Colorado (1955-59); and, since 1959, Water Resources Center Archives, University of California, Berkeley. Publications in the Archives series include, among others, Water wells: an annotated bibliography; Water: a subject heading list; and Index to periodical literature on aspects of water in California.

SACRAMENTO BEE Jan. 14, 1971

Sam Leedom Dies At 74; Was Former Bee City Editor, Water Board Official

Sam R. Leedom, former city editor of The Bee and later a top assistant of the California State Water Resources Board, is dead at the age of 74.

Leedom, city editor from 1927 to 1935, committed suicide yesterday in his home after suffering from cancer and the complications of an auto accident.

He lived in El Granada, a coastal town south of San Francisco. The San Mateo coroner's office reported the immediate cause of death was a self-inflicted knife wound. Leedom left a brief note for his wife.

He had been living in El Granada, a coastal town south of San Francisco, since his retirement in 1957 as administrative assistant for the water board.

Sam R. Leedom

He is survived by his wife, Ella, who taught at the Lincoln Elementary School here before her retirement

Leedom came to The Bee from Redding where he was employed as a newspaperman. His first Bee assignment was in the paper's Superior California department but stories he wrote about the bloody Thanksgiving Day Folsom Prison riot of 1927 brought him promotion to city editor. He served in that position until when whe went to the Orient shortly before the Japanese took over Manchuria.

He wrote stories about the invasion and, later, a book about the Orient.

This trip was followed by one to the Dutch East Indies and another around the world.

Returning to Sacramento, Leedom for a time operated a publicity business in partnership with Ralph K. Clark and was a member of the Capitol staff of the Associated Press before joining the water board.

He took an active interest in community theater activities and served a term as president of the old Sacramento Community Players.

Leedom was born in Montana, where his father owned a weekly newspaper in Billings.

He was a seaman in the Navy in World War I and a captain in an Army military government unit in World War II.

Before entering newspaper work in California, he attended the University of California at Berkeley, where he was a member of Tau Kappa Epsilon.

Leedom was a member of Provident Lodge of the Masons here and attained the 32nd degree in the Masonic order.

Services will be held at 11 a.m. tomorrow under Masonic auspices in the funeral home of Dutra and Randleman in Half Moon Bay.